DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 155 799 FA 010 659

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TITLE Ethnicity and Education in Thailand.
PUB DATE Mar 78
NOTE 34p.; Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Comparative and International Education Society (22nd, Mexico City, Mexico, March 14-18, 1978)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$2.06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Chinese; Culture Conflict; *Educational History; Elementary Secondary Education; *Ethnic Groups; *Ethnicity; Foreign Countries; Higher Education
IDENTIFIERS Malayans; *Thailand

ABSTRACT

With over 95 percent of the people professing Buddhism, about 90 percent having a common or related racial origin, and almost 85 percent speaking the Thai language, the Thai society is fairly homogeneous. There are, however, a few ethnic minorities of which the significant ones are the Chinese (12 percent of the population), the Malays (2 percent), and the tribal people (1 percent). The Thai government seeks to bring about a total integration of all people through education. To this end the Ministry of Education has prescribed a common curriculum with Thai as the medium of instruction. The Chinese and Malay children may, however, receive instruction in their mother tongues in the first four years of elementary school. In the secondary schools, not more than ten hours per week may be devoted to the study of the Chinese and Malay languages. Education has apparently accelerated assimilation of the Chinese and tribal people into the Thai society. It unquestionably has been reinforced by the incidence of intergroup marriage. However, it is doubtful whether it will be effective in assimilating the Malays in the face of their antipathy toward Thailand and their determination to maintain their cultural identity. (Author/IRT)

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ETHNICITY AND EDUCATION IN THAILAND

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A Paper presented at the Twenty-Second Annual Conference
of the Comparative and International Education Society
Mexico City, Mexico, March 14-18, 1978

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ETHNICITY AND EDUCATION IN THIALAND

(Abstract)

Thailand occupies a prominent position in Southeast Asia. With over ninety-five percent of the people professing Buddhism, about ninety percent having a common or related racial origin, and almost eighty-five percent speaking Thai language, the Thai society is fairly homogeneous. There are, however, a few ethnic minorities of which the significant ones are the Chinese (twelve percent), the Malays (two percent), and the tribal people (one percent). The Thais migrated to Thailand from South China in the ancient times, the Chinese came in the relatively more recent times, and the Malays occupy the southern region which was annexed to the country through conquest by the Thai rulers in the thirteenth century.

By and large, the Thais are engaged in agricultural pursuits, while the Chinese virtually dominate commerce, industry, and the professions. The relations between the two communities had been generally amicable until the beginning of the twentieth century when ethnocentricity on the part of the Chinese and national consciousness among the Thais led to prolonged internecine conflicts. The Thai government legislated measures that were designed to control the antinational activities of the Chinese and restrict their domination of the economy. Since the 1960's, however, as a result of the spirit of accommodation on both sides, the Chinese-Thai social relations have improved and assimilation has gained momentum. The Malays, on the other hand, have striven to maintain their

religious, racial, linguistic, and cultural identity and have resisted assimilation into the Thai society. The tribal people appear to pose no insurmountable difficulty in the process of assimilation.

The Thai government seeks to bring about a total integration of all people through education. To this end, the Ministry of Education has prescribed a common curriculum with Thai as the medium of instruction for all schools of the country. The Chinese and Malay children may, however, receive instruction in their mother tongues in the first four years of elementary schools. In the secondary schools, not more than ten hours per week may be devoted to the study of the Chinese and Malay languages.

Education has apparently accelerated assimilation of the Chinese and tribal people into the Thai society. It unquestionably has been reinforced by the incidence of inter-group marriages. However, it is doubtful whether it would be effective in assimilating the Malays in the face of their antipathy toward Thailand and their determination to maintain their cultural identity.

ETHNICITY AND EDUCATION IN THAILAND

Thailand occupies a prominent position in Southeast Asia. It has an area of about 200,000 square miles with a population of approximately 45,000,000 (1978).[1] It extends about 1000 miles from north to south and about 500 miles from east to west. Topographically, it is generally divided into four regions: Northern and Western Mountain Region, the Northeastern Khorat Plateau Region, the Central Lowland Region, and the Southern Peninsula Region. The climate is tropical, mostly hot and humid.[2]

The vast majority of the people (about 85 percent) are of Thai ethnic origin whose ancestors migrated from South China in the remote past and who, over the centuries, have developed a distinctly different culture and an independent national outlook. In addition, there are a few ethnic minorities most of which, by and large, are in the process of integration with the Thai society. The Chinese, who migrated to Thailand in comparatively recent times and constitute about twelve percent of the population, are the largest minority and are concentrated in the central and southern parts of the country. The Malays numbering about two percent of the population are the next largest minority and mostly live in the peninsula which once was a part of Malaysia. The remaining one percent would include the Vietnamese and the Khmer living in the eastern part, a variety of the so-called hill people scattered along the borders of Burma, Laos, and Malaysia, and a few Indians, Ceylonese, and Europeans exclusively residing in large cities.[3]

The nature of the settlements for the country as a whole is predominantly agricultural with almost 90 percent of the people living in rural areas. The degree of urbanization is at present relatively meager and is in the main limited to the central region. Of the total population, about 40 percent are concentrated in the fertile area of the central lowland region. Smaller concentrations are found along the Gulf of Thailand in the south and in the river valleys in the west, north, and east.

Buddhism has prevailed in the country for more than 700 years. Almost all Thais, except some minority groups, are Buddhists. Theravada Buddhism is the state religion and the constitution requires the king to uphold it. However, religious freedom is guaranteed.

Historical Background

The Thais are a very ancient people with a history traceable to pre-Christian times. They are cognate in race with the Chinese, and at the dawn of history they occupied the land in Yunnan, presently a province in South China. According to their legend, the Thais migrated from the Indus valley on the Indian subcontinent and established a series of kingdoms in Yunnan under Indian dynasties (about A.D. 650-1253), of which the kingdom of Nan Chao was the most powerful. Historical evidence, however, begins with the Mongol conquest of Yunnan when the kingdom of Nan Chao was destroyed in 1253 and the Thais were forced to migrate southward down the valleys of the Mekong and Salween rivers. They gradually infiltrated the region, displacing and mingling with the Mon and Khmer populations of the Menam river valley.[4]

The ethnic groups that preceded the Thais in the occupation of Thailand had developed advanced civilizations about 900 A.D. The Thais set up their first kingdoms in Thailand during the thirteenth century and soon became the dominant group. Wars were fought among the Thai states as well as with the neighboring countries of Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, and Burma. In the course of history, the Thais established kingdoms at Sukhothai (1238-1438), Ayudhya (1350-1767), Thon Buri (1767-1782), and Bangkok (1782-1932). In 1782, General Chakri established the kingdom at Bangkok and unified the whole country under his sovereignty. The Chakri dynasty maintained its absolute rule until 1932 when constitutional monarchy was established through a bloodless coup d'etat. Though there have been numerous changes of government since 1932 through coups d'etat and new constitutions, power has remained with the cabinet, and political parties and elections have played a relatively insignificant role. Thailand has been subject to foreign rule only for a very brief period, but it has never been under the subjugation of a Western colonial power.[5]

Ethnic Groups

The significant ethnic minorities in Thailand are the Chinese, the Malays, and the hill tribes.

Chinese: The Chinese are the most important minority--numerically, socially, and economically. They number about five million, are influential in the communal life, and virtually control the commerce and industry of Thailand. They are largely concentrated in the Bangkok-Chao

Phraya region in the central part of the country as well as in the Kra Isthmus region of the Malay Peninsula.

Until the early years of this century, the Chinese immigrants had for centuries come freely to Thailand and engaged in the tasks associated with commerce and industry which generally did not interest the Thais. In the nineteenth century, their immigration was encouraged in order to meet the growing need for non-agricultural labor created by the country's expanding industries and commerce. The Thai disinclination for anything other than traditional pursuits left the Chinese to acquire control of the commercial and industrial enterprises.

Over the centuries, because of racial cognation and religious affinity, the assimilation of the Chinese immigrants into the Thai society had been relatively easy and communal harmony prevailed. However, during the first quarter of the twentieth century, as the Chinese migrant community grew in size and developed ethnocentricity and as nationalism arose among the Thais, the Chinese-Thai social relations deteriorated. Beginning 1926, measures were taken to curtail Chinese immigration, and after World War II it was completely stopped to stem the spread of communistic influence from China. Legal restrictions were imposed on the economic activities of the aliens which primarily were meant to curb the Chinese monopoly of commerce and industry in Thailand.[6]

Since the 1960's, the Chinese-Thai social relations have become increasingly amicable and the integration of the two groups has made rapid advance. This is partly because the Chinese immigration has come to a halt and partly because there is now opportunity of full participation

in all aspects of national life for those ethnic Chinese whose parents chose to become part of the Thai society. To a great extent, the increasing incidence of intergroup marriages, active economic collaboration between the upper class members of both the groups, and common school curriculum for all children of the country have accelerated the process of Chinese assimilation into the Thai society and have contributed to communal harmony. The integration of the upper class Chinese has been particularly impressive in that they freely intermarry with the upper class Thais, often use Thai names, give their children Thai and Western education, and proudly hold prominent social and official positions in the Thai society. Acculturation to Thai life is widespread amond the second and third generation Chinese. As a consequence, an extremely high percentage of Thailand's urban population is of mixed Chinese-Thai blood. By and large, the interpersonal relations between the Chinese and Thais are friendly except where their economic interests clash. At the higher levels of the society, the conflict of interests is usually resolved by partnership between the business acumen of the Chinese and the political power of the Thais.[7]

The chief distinguishing characteristics of the Chinese ethnic group in Thailand have been their concentration in urban centers and their domination of the non-agricultural sectors of the economy. They are well represented in the professions as well as in non-professional employment.

Malays: The next largest ethnic minority group, numbering about one million, is the Malay community mostly concentrated in the south

near the Malaysian border. The Thai Malays have not been culturally absorbed in the Thai society in spite of having spent almost six centuries under Thai political control. The Malays in Thailand represent a fairly homogeneous minority that has been highly resistant to assimilation into the Thai culture. Except at the official level, they have little contact with their Thai neighbors. Differences in religion, language, and ethnic origin are the barriers that have impeded the process of assimilation and have resulted in persistent political and social strains in relations between the central government and the southern provinces. Malays profess Islam, speak Malay language, and are of Polynesian stock. Thais, on the other hand, are Buddhists, speak Thai language, and are of Chinese-related origin.

The cultural affiliation of the Thai Malays is with the Malays of Malaysia from whom they draw inspiration and moral support. Prior to World War II, the Thai Malays, by and large, had been a politically inactive people, contented with their status in the Thai society. However, the rise of nationalism in the postwar period among the Islamic people, especially in Malaysia and Indonesia, had a profound effect on the Thai Malays. They asserted their status as a homogeneous minority group with their unique religious, linguistic, and cultural characteristics. They demanded a number of provisions to ensure perpetuation of their religion, language, and culture. Agitation and violence followed and the Thai government made some concessions in 1948 in the areas of education, religion, administration of justice, and political representation of Thai Malays in the central government. This lessened the dissatisfaction

of the Thai Malays to some extent. However, in mid-1970 there was recurrence of friction over certain issues. The Thai government has undertaken a number of measures designed to improve the living conditions of the Thai Malays and to increase their identity with, and loyalty to, the Thai nation.[8]

Hill Tribes: Several hill tribes live in the deep jungles of the foothills and in the mountains along the borders of Burma, Laos, and Malaysia, and collectively number between 200,000 and 400,000 persons. The major groups are the Karen, the Akha, the Lisu, the Lahu, the Miao, and the Yao. These groups are differentiated from each other and from the Thais in terms of customs and language and have close ethnic ties with groups in countries across the borders. Despite these divergences, relations among the various groups generally tend to be cordial. Although numerically insignificant, the hill tribes are politically of great importance because as unassimilated groups they are susceptible to exploitation by the forces of subversion and insurrection. Because of ethnic affinity with the Thais and in the absence of any irreconciliable differences of language, religion, and culture, these groups would be assimilated in the Thai society in the near future, particularly in view of the determined efforts of the government to this end.[9]

Ethnic Policy

The characteristics of an integrated and unified nation are present to a greater extent in Thailand than in any other country of Southeast Asia. The Thai language, along with its variants, is the mother

tongue of almost 85 percent of the people and is spoken by many others as a second language. The great majority of the people, almost 90 percent, have a common or related ethnic origin. Finally, almost 95 percent of the people profess Buddhist religion.[10] It is the policy of the Thai government to bring about complete assimilation of all people to stimulate their participation in national life, and to develop a common national outlook in them, regardless of their racial or cultural background. The measures used to implement this policy and the success of the policy vary from group to group, depending on the degree of ethnic solidarity, political implications, and considerations of national security. The process of assimilation has been very successful among the Chinese, is making considerable progress among the tribal people, and is actively resisted by the Malays.[11]

Development of Education

The earliest influence, having a bearing on Thai education, came from India in the form of Hinduism and in the establishment of two highly advanced Hindu empires of Dvaravati and Chenla in what are today Thailand and Cambodia. This influence gradually spread to other parts of the region and led to the creation of numerous city-states in Southeast Asia. The Brahman priests, who were also teachers and skilled in writing and administration, were a dominant force of the period. During the fourteenth century, they served in the royal Thai courts as advisers, performed religious ceremonies, and taught princes the Vedas and classical Indian treatises on arts and sciences. Their

influence was largely restricted to the aristocracy, and the masses were almost untouched.[12]

About the thirteenth century, another influence from India, this time Buddhism, made its way to Thailand and effectively challenged the aristocratic concept of absolute monarchy and the rigid social order of Hinduism. The Buddhist priests and teachers made appeal to the masses rather than just to the rulers. As a result of their egalitarian approach, they had a profound effect on the development of education in the region through the succeeding centuries. For the Buddhist monks, both teaching and learning were important social and religious activities. Therefore, wherever they settled and established monasteries, they also started schools, taught everyone, prince or peasant alike, and offered the same education for all, without any distinction of rank.

The tradition came to be established that boys at an early age were sent to monasteries for education which was both secular and religious. The majority of them did not go beyond the elementary stage. Only the talented few were trained for public offices or to serve as monks. By the seventeenth century, the position of monks as teachers of the people was widely recognized and they were greatly venerated. The monks became the professional teachers of the Thai people and their authority was respected by the kings.

Education in monasteries was free, but not compulsory. A boy was attached to a monk for the duration of his stay in the monastery. He was expected to receive instruction from him and serve him in many ways.

Each monastery had its own library with palm leaf manuscripts used as books. Although the literature was primarily religious, monasteries in Bangkok had books on theory and practice of medicine, mythology, and history as well.

The curriculum included a study of Pali, Sanskrit, and Thai languages, elementary arithmetic, Buddhist ethics, simple medicine, and manners. There were no set lessons of instruction or a designated room for teaching or even a fixed daily schedule for academic work. The methods of learning were recitation, intonation, and memorization. Each pupil progressed at his own pace.

Elementary education was followed by novitiation into monkhood for the talented few who were judged fit for advanced training. They studied Buddhist scriptures and followed a specialized course comprising history, astrology, law, literature, and medicine. They prepared themselves to be monks, teachers, and holders of public offices.

The majority of the boys returned home after elementary education in the monasteries, and learnt a trade or a craft under the supervision of their fathers. Only the novices stayed back for further training and ordination as monks in their life-long commitment to the monastic order. The boys who spent time in the monasteries were widely respected in the community for their learning. There was no formal education for girls as there was no provision for them to stay in the monasteries. They were taught in the home by the mothers the arts of handicraft, weaving, cooking, and helping in the fields.

For almost six centuries, from the thirteenth to the middle of the nineteenth century, education in Thailand was of the monastic order and was available to everyone. It was provided in accordance with the Buddhist tradition by the monks for whom teaching was a regular and important part of their lives. For the majority of the youths, it basically consisted of reading, writing, arithmetic, and religion. For the talented few, initiation into the religious order was the natural course to follow along with specialization in other subjects. Education was free to the rich and poor alike and was the same for all, whether prince or peasant. It was unstructured and individualized and was directed toward character training according to the ideals of Buddhism.[13]

The monastic system of education continued intact until the middle of the nineteenth century when King Mongkut (1851-1868) and his son, King Chulalongkorn (1868-1910), came in contact with the Western nations and recognized the need for modern secular education. They took measures to train qualified civil servants for the government with a view to modernize the country and to deal with the Western nations more effectively.[14]

King Mongkut had many Christian missionaries as teachers and friends, employed Western advisers for the government, and appointed English tutors for the royal children. Also, he sent government officials and princes abroad for further study.

King Chulalongkorn continued the policies of his father. In addition, he founded a palace school in 1871 for the children of the nobility which offered modern education including courses in English language. He encouraged the establishment of private schools by Thais

and foreign missionaries. Later, he decided to extend the Western-type secular education to all his subjects through the existing framework of the monastic schools. He decreed that every wat (Buddhist temple) offer instruction to the children of its locality. Gradually, there developed two types of schools in the monasteries--the traditional monastic schools and the government primary schools. The former followed the traditional pattern of education, with the addition of a few government textbooks. The curriculum in the latter included reading, writing, arithmetic, and religion, as well as composition, grammar, history, geography, and science based on government textbooks.

With the creation of the Ministry of Education in 1892, education became the responsibility of the central government. By regular inspection and by enforcing the use of government textbooks, the government was able to establish a uniform state education system. Thai education was patterned after the English model, with some adaptations from the Japanese education system.[15]

During the early years of the twentieth century, state schools were established in increasing numbers, and a close government supervision was extended to the monastic schools. For many years after the introduction of compulsory education in 1921, the government relied heavily on the monasteries for both teachers and accommodation for state primary schools. Even today, about 50 percent of all Thai primary schools are located in the monasteries throughout the country and their curriculum is no different from that of any secular school. Thus, the monastic schools have played a very important role in the development of the Thai state education system.[16]

All the monastic schools have not been secularized, and two types of schools following the traditional pattern still exist. They are Pali-Dharma monastic schools and Pali-Mathayom secondary schools. In the former, boys after four years of primary education are accepted and are required to follow a two-year full-time course in monastic education with a concentration on Dharma and Pali language, although in recent years the Ministry of Education has insisted on a wider curriculum. The Pali-Mathayom schools follow the secondary school curriculum prescribed by the Ministry except that the study of Dharma and Pali replaces art, handicraft, music, physical education, and other practical subjects. Both of these types of schools are slated to be abolished.[17]

System of Education

The vast majority of the Thai schools are under the authority of the central government. The kindergarten and preschool education is non-compulsory and largely privately managed. The elementary school has seven grades and is divided into two levels: The lower level comprises grades one through four, and the upper level, grades five through seven. The secondary school also has two levels: Grades eight through ten compose the lower level whereas grades eleven and twelve, the upper level. The lower level of the secondary school serves as a foundation for its upper level which may be academic, general, or vocational. The vocational stream includes grade thirteen, in addition.

Elementary education--grades one through seven--is free and compulsory. Each cycle of the elementary and secondary education is

followed by a competitive examination for admission to the next cycle. This results in a large number of dropouts and repeaters. Beyond the secondary education, there are numerous technical institutes, colleges, and universities with diverse programs of varied lengths.

Centralized control has been characteristic of the Thai state educational system since its inception. The actual financing and administration of the different educational programs are shared by several governmental agencies and are therefore complex. The teaching and administrative staff of all except the private schools are government employees. Government regulations determine school hours, curricula, textbooks, examinations, dress of students, and design of school buildings. The private schools operated by the fraternal associations of the Chinese community, Buddhist monasteries, and Christian mission groups are subject to the regulations of the government.

Although the government has permitted the opening of private elementary and secondary schools, it has not favored the establishment of colleges and universities under private management. With the exception of two Buddhist ecclesiastical colleges under royal patronage but religious supervision, all institutions of higher education are financed and administered by the central government.[18]

Problems of Education

Thailand has within its borders a number of ethnic minorities of which the Chinese and the Malays are the largest. Being surrounded by

communist countries to the east and north, the government is always apprehensive of communist propaganda, infiltration, and insurgency. Education is viewed as a means of inclucating patriotism, promoting social integration, strengthening national unity, and combatting communism.

The fraternal associations of the Chinese community were active from the very beginning in providing education for the Chinese children. The Chinese primary and secondary schools, first established in 1911 and organized on the pattern of education in China, taught children in the Chinese language, imparted Chinese culture, and fostered Chinese national feelings. Being alarmed by the possibility of dangerous consequences of these educational activities, the Thai government took measures in 1933 to regulate and control the Chinese schools. In order to implement the policy designed to assimilate the ethnic minorities into the Thai society and to instil in them undivided loyalty to Thailand, teachers in all Chinese schools were required to be literate in Thai, Thai was declared to be the language of instruction, and not more than ten hours per week could be assigned for the teaching of a foreign language. Rising nationalism among the Thais in the late 1930's and Chinese resistance to comply with the governmental regulations resulted in the closing of the majority of the Chinese schools.[19]

Many Chinese schools reopened after World War II. However, communist control of the mainland China and subversive activities of Communists in the neighboring countries again led the Thai government in 1947 to impose severe restrictions on Chinese schools, requiring them

to conform to the Thai national curriculum. Chinese education was limited to the first four years of elementary school, teaching of Chinese language in secondary schools was banned, and subjects and activities that tended to stimulate Chinese nationalism were prohibited. In 1967, the ban on the instruction of Chinese language in secondary schools was lifted, but the restriction of devoting not more than ten hours per week to its teaching is still in force. The activities of Chinese schools supported by the Chinese fraternal associations continue to be closely supervised by the government despite the fact that Chinese of ethnic origin are more fully integrated with the national life in Thailand than in any other country of Southeast Asia. The Chinese schools that comply with the regulations of the Ministry of Education receive financial subsidies from the government. The Chinese children may learn Chinese by attending night schools which are mainly language-teaching institutions, although some of them offer high-level instruction in academic and vocational subjects as well. The Chinese-language night schools may operate only in the Bangkok area.[20]

Except for a limited amount of religious instruction provided at the local mosque, consisting largely of memorizing verses from the Quran, the Malay community provides no formal education for its children. Lacking the tradition of monastic education associated with Buddhism, the Thai Malays have had little opportunity of education even in their own language, and have remained largely an illiterate group. Yet, they have vigorously resisted the efforts of the Thai government to enforce the provisions of the Compulsory Education Act

in their area. They have objected to Thai education for their children because they consider it a move to bring about their cultural assimilation with the Thais. They have been opposed to entrusting their children to a school system which would not use Malay as the medium of instruction and which would not permit the teaching of Islam.

As a concession in response to the agitation of Malays, the Thai government has permitted the first four years of elementary education in Malay language in the Malay area. But the secondary schools must follow the Thai national curriculum. Innovative techniques to facilitate the instruction of Thai language in the Malay-speaking area are being tried. Both teachers and students are offered rewards as incentives to promote Thai language. However, there is still strong resistance on the part of the Malays to national education. This has hindered the process of assimilation of the Malays into the Thai society.[21]

In an attempt to integrate the tribal people of the mountainous regions into the Thai society, the Border Patrol Police operates schools for children who cannot attend the regularly established government schools. In addition, there are boarding schools maintained, where feasible, for the children of the ethnic minorities. The objective of these measures is to bring the hill tribes into the main stream of national life by giving them Thai language and Thai culture. In the absence of any active hostility among the tribal people toward the Thais, the efforts of the Thai government are bearing fruits.

One of the measures adopted by the Thai government to bring about integration of the ethnic groups into national life is to actively promote the use of Thai language in all parts of the country. Law requires Thai to be the language of instruction in all schools, public or private. It is also the language of administration at all levels. Efforts of the government to end instruction in the languages of the ethnic minorities were opposed both by the Chinese and Malays. Therefore, use of Chinese and Malay in the first four years of elementary schools has been permitted.

Although most of the Chinese, especially those born and raised in Thailand, know Thai well and use it outside their own ethnic circle, the Thai businessmen also find it expedient to know the Chinese in their dealings with the Chinese businessmen. Likewise, the Chinese of means have an adequate knowledge of Thai, feel no resentment toward it, and use it effectively to their advantage.

Malay is spoken by the Malays in the southern part of the country. Although Thai is the language of administration in the region and is taught in schools, many Malays know only very little of it despite their exposure to it for centuries. This is mainly due to the fact that Malays, being Muslims, resent learning Thai, a language associated with Buddhism. However, as a result of intense government drive to popularize Thai in the more recent times, the situation is gradually changing. In 1965, about 25 percent of the Malay population could speak Thai but the percentage for the group 10 to 19 years of age was forty.[22]

The government supports the use of English for the technical and scientific development of Thailand and requires the instruction of Thai as national language for the unification of the country. The dominant purpose of the educational policy is to integrate the ethnic minority groups into the Thai society. More than 95 percent of the ethnic Chinese children attend Thai government schools rather than those operated by their own community. The educational process has thus accelerated the assimilation of the Chinese into the Thai society.[23] In contrast, even though Thai may come to be widely used by the Malays, their assimilation into the Thai society would be difficult because of homogeneity of their population and their religious and cultural differences.

In addition to the problems emanating from the presence of ethnic minorities in the country, the Thai educational system suffers from certain other weaknesses. During the reign of King Chulalongkorn (1868-1910), the purpose of education came to be recognized as the preparation of an intellectual elite for civil service. This purpose continues to dominate the thinking of the majority of the Thais even today. Such a view of education is too restrictive and hampers the supply of adequate trained manpower for the technological development of the country.[24] By and large, the Thai youths pursue the academic education with the single purpose of entering the civil service, and the technical and vocational programs have only marginal appeal to them. The desire for academic education is reinforced by the tradition of monastic education which has commanded great respect in the society. The result is that

the civil service usually recruits the ablest of the youths, with the remainder left for other professions and vocations. In addition to causing imbalance in the availability of trained manpower, overemphasis on academic education has been detrimental to the development of pragmatic attitude necessary for the modernization of the country.

Because of the increase in population and growing realization of the value of education, there is now almost an insatiable demand for secondary and higher education. The limited facilities available have led to intense competition for admission at every level. In 1970, only about two percent of all students were enrolled in colleges and universities.[25]

Although the first university in Thailand was established in 1917, a large number of students have been traditionally going abroad for higher studies, mostly at the expense of the government. On return, they have occupied key positions in the government and have perpetuated the practice. Such a practice, although laudable for its possible contribution to the development of a liberal outlook and for providing an exposure to the Western education, tends to create an air of superiority among those who hold foreign degrees and an unbridgeable cultural gap between them and the rest of the people. Besides, it makes education very expensive and limited to the few. Further, since those with foreign education are given preference in job appointments, the indigenous institutions tend to be regarded as inferior, their growth is undermined, and their graduates often suffer from a sense of frustration. Despite its independence from colonial subjugation all through its history,

Thailand has not become self-reliant in modern higher education. As a consequence, a large number of Thai students still go abroad partly in quest of education, partly in lure of prestige that is associated with foreign education, and partly in search of economic security that goes along with it. Establishment of the institutions of higher education of superior standards would be a sound investment in Thailand's future development.

Thailand has had a history of uninterrupted traditional education for centuries based on Buddhist monastic order. It served Thais well in molding their character, in generating in them respect for learning, and in creating a civilized society. It equipped them with the intellectual power for the pursuit of abstract knowledge and spiritual revelations. However, it failed to create in them a pragmatic attitude necessary for the material development of Thailand and for the appreciation of worldly possessions. The monastic education is an anachronism in the context of modern Thailand. It seeks to sublimate the soul but ignores the needs of the body. It provides for character training but not career training. The diachotomy in the values of the traditional monastic education and the modern secular education creats a mental conflict in the Thai youth. What is needed is an amalgamation of the best of the two.[26]

A noticeable consequence of the introduction of modern secular education has been a gradual erosion of Buddhist influence in the daily life of the people, particularly of the growing generation. Often, a youth exposed to modern education becomes disenchanted with Buddhism

and alienated from his community. He becomes a misfit among his own people and is lured away by the attractions of the city life.[27]

The Buddhist order has not made the necessary adjustment to the changing society. The gap between the Buddhist monks and the people, especially the young ones, is widening, and there is an apparent diminution in public veneration for them. The monks can play a vitally important role in the expansion of education if they can only learn new academic subjects and modern methods of teaching. The shortage of school buildings and teachers can be partially alleviated by using temple buildings and trained monks.[28]

One of the legacies of the Buddhist monastic education is the traditional method of learning by memorization, intonation, and recitation. Despite the introduction of modern secular education in the country, the traditional method of learning still persists. This method is not conducive to the development of rational judgment, problem solving skills, creativity, and imagination. The long-range effect of this method of learning is likely to be the stunted mental growth of the learner.

Inexperienced staffs, inadequate equipment, shortage of qualified teachers, and insufficient facilities would characterize the education in Thailand.[29] In the mid-1960's, less than two-thirds of all teachers held certificates or diplomas. Poor teacher qualifications were, in part, responsible for a large number of students failing in the elementary schools. The quality of education is still low despite the introduction of improved methods of teaching and the increased

expenditure of money. Attendance in many areas is poor and drop-out rate is alarmingly high.[30]

Teacher education in Thailand has grown steadily during the past 60 years, and especially in the last two decades. However, more and better qualified teachers are needed to meet the challenge of technological advancement and increasing population. Rural schools are particularly disadvantaged for lack of competent teachers. Teacher-training institutions need to be established in provincial areas to provide teachers for rural schools.[31] About 80 percent of the teachers are low-paid, with poor standard of living. Consequently, they hardly have any zeal for teaching. Efforts to improve the quality of education would have to include measures to uplift the lot of elementary and secondary school teachers.[32]

Institutions of higher education have low standards and limited facilities. They are managed by different agencies of the government which sometimes are at cross-purposes with one another. In order to be effective instruments of change, they need to function as autonomous bodies free from governmental interference, and their operations need to be coordinated by one agency. At present, they primarily train personnel for the various departments of the government and are not engaged in research activities to any significant degree.[33]

CONCLUSION

With over ninety-five percent of the people professing Buddhism, about ninety percent having more or less a common racial extraction, and almost eighty-five percent speaking Thai language, the Thai

society is fairly homogeneous. There are, however, a few ethnic minorities of which the significant ones are the Chinese, the Malays, and the tribal people. Because of the racial and religious affinity and the emergent spirit of accommodation, the Chinese are integrating into the Thai society rapidly, although their relations had been marred in the past by tensions and conflicts. Further, as a result of the concerted efforts on the part of the government and because the tribal people are not inherently opposed to the Thai culture, they pose no serious problem to the integrative process and their assimilation into the Thai society is just a matter of time. On the other hand, the Malays, because of the differences of religion, race, and language, have resisted assimilation into the Thai society despite the fact that they have lived in Thailand for over six centuries.

The Thai government is using education as an instrument for integration of the ethnic minority groups into the Thai society. The Ministry of Education has prescribed a common curriculum and has required instruction in Thai language in all schools of the nation. The Chinese and Malay children may, however, receive instruction in their mother tongues in the first four years of elementary schools. In the secondary schools, not more than ten hours per week may be devoted to the teaching of the Chinese and Malay languages. Whereas education is apparently proving to be an effective integrative force among the Chinese and the tribal people, it is doubtful if it would go beyond imparting a knowledge of the Thai literature and Thai language to the Malays. The real adhesive bond that acts as a source of assimilation in a society is the

phenomenon of inter-group marriage. While the incidence of inter-group marriages is on the increase among the Thais, Chinese, and tribal people, its possibility between the Thais and Malays is very remote because of the differences of religion, race, and language. Finally, the attitudes of the Thai Malays toward the Thai nation are colored by their physical proximity to Malaysia and by the historical event of forceful annexation of their areas to Thailand about six hundred years ago. The Thai Malays draw inspiration from Malaysia, consider themselves part of it religiously, racially, linguistically, and culturally, and would like to be united to it politically. In the face of these polarizing forces, whether education will be able to help assimilate the Malays into the Thai society remains questionable.

FOOTNOTES

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[2]John W. Henderson and others, Area Handbook for Thailand, 3rd revision (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1971), pp. 7-8.

[3]Frank J. Moore, Thailand: Its People, Its Society, Its Culture (New Haven: Human Relations Area Files Press, 1974), pp. 31-34.

[4]Ronald B. Smith, Siam (Bethesda, Maryland: Decatur Press, Inc., 1966), pp. 9-11.

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[7]D. Insor, Thailand: A Political, Social, and Economic Analysis (New York: Praeger, 1963), pp. 134-139.

[8]Wendell Blanchard, Thailand: Its People, Its Society, Its Culture (New Haven: Human Relations Area Files Press, 1966), pp. 6, 60-62.

[9]Frank J. Moore, op. cit., pp. 74-77.

[10]The Statesman's Year-Book, op. cit., p. 1373.

[11]Robert Gurevich, "Language, Minority Education, and Social Mobility: The Case of Rural Northeast Thailand," Journal of Research and Development in Education, Vol. 9, No. 4 (Summer, 1976), pp. 137-144.

[12]David K. Wyatt, The Politics of Reform in Thailand (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), pp. 1-4.

[13]J. K. P. Watson, "The Monastic Tradition of Education in Thailand," Paedagogica Historica, Vol. 13, No. 2 (1973), pp. 522-523.
David K. Wyatt, op. cit., pp. 1-23.

[14]Frank J. Moore, op. cit., pp. 56-58.
David K. Wyatt, op. cit., pp. 24-34.

[15]Harold P. Adams, A Brief Historical Sketch of Educational Development in Thailand (Washington, D. C.: Agency for International Development, Department of State, 1970), pp. 1-27.

[16]J. K. P. Watson, op. cit, p. 527.
David K. Wyatt, op. cit., pp. 61-83.

[17]J. K. P. Watson, op. cit., p. 528.

[18]Saeng Sanguanruang, Development Planning in Thailand: The Role of the University (Singapore: Regional Institute of Higher Education and Development, 1973), pp. 86-91.

[19]Wendell Blanchard, op. cit., pp. 456-457.
Frank J. Moore, op. cit., pp. 258-259.

[20]Stanley P. Wronski and P. K. Sawasdi, Secondary Education, Manpower, and Educational Planning in Thailand, Education in Thailand, Publication Number Two (East Lansing, Michigan: Institute for International Studies in Education, College of Education, Michigan State University, 1966), pp. 77-79.

[21]Nicholas Bennett and K. Vorapipatana, Towards Community-Centered Education for National Harmony and Development in Thailand, I.I.E.P. Semniar, paper 13, UNESCO (Paris: International Institute for Educational Planning, 1975), pp. 23-27.

[22]John W. Henderson, op. cit., p. 145.

[23]Ibid.

[24]Bulletin of the UNESCO Regional Office for Education in Asia, "Educational Development in Thailand, 1960-1970," Vol. 6, No. 2 (March, 1972), pp. 188-190.

[25]Sai-ing Vichitsonggram, "General Problems in Education and the Proposal for the Development Plan of University Adult Education in Thailand," Journal of International Congress of University Adult Education, Vol. 9, No. 2 (July, 1970), pp. 15-18.

[26]Amnuay Tapingkae and Louis J. Setti, Education in Thailand: Some Thai Perspectives (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1973), pp. 33-35.

[27]Ibid., p. 50.

[28]Ibid., pp. 71-77.

[29]Nicholas Bennett, "Educational Reforms in Thailand," Education in Asia, No. 8 (September, 1975), pp. 7-8.

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[32]Ammuay Tapingkae, op. cit., pp. 39-43.

[33]Nicnolas Bennett, Problems of Financing the Thai Educational System During the 1960's and 1970's, Financing Educational Systems: Country Case Studies 3, UNESCO (Paris: International Institute for Educational Planning, 1975), pp. 153-161.

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